

SHIPWRECKED, SNAKE-BIT & SET UP 22.7.18

Perspective is how we see things, and they can change. Genesis 6:8-9 – Noah found favour/grace in the eyes of God. He was a righteous man, a blameless man and a man who walked faithfully, with God. ‘Rest’ found favour in simple obedience – he went where no one else had gone before, saw and did things people had never seen nor done before; ‘rest’ was his culture because his confidence was founded in what God said.

When God speaks, when God has been spoken, we can hold on to it dearly.

Joshua 6. ...² Then the LORD said to Joshua, “See, I have delivered Jericho into your hands, along with its king and its fighting men...”

Jericho was a fortified city with barbaric people within; the Israelites would have known the history. In the 50s archaeologists denied the biblical account of the fall of Jericho. In the 90s the city was discovered, and details uncovered that things happened as described in the Word including finding homes that were not destroyed (Rahab) and grain in jars showing no plunder was removed. Perspectives change.

God had said to Joshua “I have” given you the city. The city was theirs now – now they had some things they needed to do. Chapter 5 reveals the men were circumcised – they would have been tender – the instructions to walk around the walls six days without speaking – flesh cannot rule. Their families had died in a wilderness of wrong speech, a desert of ingratitude and unbelief. For Joshua, his confidence rested in what God said. What God has given we must receive but in the case of Jericho they needed to simply shut up until it was time to shout. The few things they needed to do? Believe what God said; receive it by faith realising there may be some pain in the process. There can be pain in the midst of a miracle, but purpose is beyond pain or the reason for the discomfort. Consider Jesus in Gethsemane – we remain aware of the purpose, aware of God’s ability to empower us (grace) – often circumstances and situations are most painful at the most pivotal moment. Hang on to God’s ‘I have’s and lean into His ‘I will’ s. When Christ was at His most distressing point, He was closest to the reason He came.

2 Corinthians 4:13-18 NKJV: ¹³ And since we have the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, “I believed and therefore I spoke,” we also believe and therefore speak, ¹⁴ knowing that He who raised up the Lord Jesus will also raise us up with Jesus and will present us with you. ¹⁵ For all things are for your sakes, that grace, having spread through the many, may cause thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God. ¹⁶ Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. ¹⁷ For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, ¹⁸ **while** we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.’

We walk by faith, and not by (natural) sight. We walk as we hear what God has said and not according to what we see or don’t see in the natural. We must consider what God is seeing.

2 Corinthians 11:16-30: ¹⁶ I repeat: Let no one take me for a fool. But if you do, then tolerate me just as you would a fool, so that I may do a little boasting. ¹⁷ In this self-confident boasting I am not talking as the Lord would, but as a fool. ¹⁸ Since many are boasting in the way the world does, I too will boast. ¹⁹ You gladly put up with fools since you are so wise! ²⁰ In fact, you even put up with anyone who enslaves you or exploits you or takes advantage of you or puts on airs or slaps you in the face. ²¹ To my shame I admit that we were too weak for that! Whatever anyone else dares to boast about—I am speaking as a fool—I also dare to boast about. ²² Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they Abraham’s descendants? So, am I. ²³ Are they servants of Christ? (I am out of my mind to talk like this.) I am more. I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. ²⁴ Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. ²⁵ Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was pelted with stones, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, ²⁶ I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my fellow Jews, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false believers. ²⁷ I have laboured and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. ²⁸ Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches. ²⁹ Who is weak, and I do not feel weak? Who is led into sin, and I do not inwardly burn? ³⁰ If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness.

Paul's love for Christ, his deep love for people and his concern/burden for all the churches compelled him beyond any suffering. Paul understood so clearly that the church has the capacity to solve the problems of the world, such as his great heart for humanity. Circumstances, situations were not louder than God's word.

1. SHIPWRECKED:

Shipwrecked more than once! Bobbing around in the ocean! Please read Acts 27-28:10. Paul is in the middle of God's will and in the middle of a storm – a heavy ship, impatient sailors and hurricane type wind/waves; about to run aground and Paul declares 'So keep up your courage, men, **for I have faith in God that it will happen just as he told me.**' Acts 27:25

Paul may well have pulled on Isaiah 43:1-2: 'But now, this is what the LORD says— He who created you, Jacob, He who formed you, Israel: "Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. ²When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.' Paul knew in the most stressful of times, God is doing the most – working good in every situation.

What is God seeing? Can anything good come out of this? John 1:4. Nathanael asked the same question: John 1:46. Nazareth/small town/carpenter's son; Jesus' own did not receive Him. Remember in the most distressing of times, God will do the most.

James 1:2-4. When situations/circumstances test our faith, we don't need to or blame why they occurred but if we are continuing to do the wrong things after we know they are wrong, we must stop it – how many times must we go around the mountain. The testing of our faith produces stamina and strength to persevere! People of faith see things differently and see some things others can't or won't. Be careful of your perspectives – stuff happens, offences must come – shipwrecks happen but just Paul says, 'Keep courage' and don't let flesh take you out just before the breakthrough. Jesus will take you through, but we too must navigate these chartered waters.

2. SNAKE-BIT: Acts 27:38-28:10. See 28:5: 'But Paul shook the snake off into the fire and suffered no ill effect.'

Anyone who has done or is doing anything significant for God has been or will be 'snake-bitten'. Paul's response: no words recorded; shut up and flick it off. Paul would have wanted to have said something. Who hasn't ever said 'it happens in 3s' – sometimes it happens in 10s. Toxic pain, been bitten – know what God has said – keep your thoughts right and speak right even if this means say nothing at the time. Hold course, keep your courage – you will need it to continue with what God has asked. Paul knew he was going to Rome and God would take him through. See so much of what Paul went through as set up to fulfil destiny.

3. SET UP:

The islanders perceived Paul to be a murderer one minute (the reason he must have been snake bitten) and when he didn't die they perceived him to be a God. (Perspectives change). Both perceptions were wrong. The same hand that was bitten was the same hand that healed the sick on the island and brought favour, salvation and the planting of the church in Malta. Snake-bite led to a set up.

Paul was so grateful for what he had been through. He got to Rome – still saw dreadful things there although right in the middle of the will of God.

These thoughts designed to stimulate wholesome thinking. Have you been shipwrecked? Learn what you need to learn. We just don't need to go through some things – get it right, some things just need to be laid down. Sometimes things go wrong when you're doing right – the purpose is found in relationship with Jesus Christ especially at those times when other around you are able to do so little. Your reactions to things may need to change. Maybe there are times when it is best to say nothing, but see what God sees; pull on what He has said.

The ultimate shipwreck is to not be on board with Jesus Christ and what He has already done, already said. In Joshua we see the 'I have' and in Acts 27 we see the 'I will'. See, what God sees. Circumstances might try and take you out (shipwrecks); the enemy may bite (snake-bitten) but God who sees the end from the beginning taught Joseph this perspective that what the enemy meant for evil God intended for good for the saving of many souls. Genesis 50:20.

Our natural perceptions have the ability to take us out, but if we take God at His Word, He will take us through.